

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 21079

EXDIS

E.O. 12065: RDS 11/5/85 (MURPHY, R. W.) OR/M
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, RP
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH CARDINAL SIN

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: CARDINAL SIN, DISCUSSING WITH US HIS RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS, WHICH HAVE INDICATED TO MANY OBSERVERS HIS INTEREST IN PLAYING A GROWING POLITICAL ROLE, SAID HE KNOWS "WHEN TO STOP." AT SAME TIME, SIN GAVE EVERY INDICATION THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SPEAK OUT AS HE HAS IN PAST MONTHS. HE AFFIRMED THAT THE SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES DOES NOT WARRANT RESORTING TO VIOLENCE -- "NOT YET." TERMED LOCAL ELECTIONS WITHIN EIGHTEEN MONTHS WITH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 1984 A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION. STATED MILITARY ABUSES OF CIVILIANS IN RURAL AREAS HAS ABATED. CARDINAL WILL CONTINUE HIS POLICY OF "CRITICAL COLLABORATION." END SUMMARY.

3. AMBASSADOR AND POLOFF MET WITH CARDINAL SIN NOVEMBER 1. MEETING COVERED CARDINAL'S RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH INDICATE TO MANY HERE HIS INTEREST IN/ ASPIRATION FOR A GROWING POLITICAL ROLE, THE CARDINAL'S FUTURE ACTIVITIES, SITUATION IN RURAL AREAS, RECENT
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MANILA SYNOD, "CRITICAL COLLABORATION," PASTORAL LETTER ON VIOLENCE, AND SIN'S VIEWS ON MARTIAL LAW.

4. SIN DISMISSED POLITICAL ROLE FOR HIMSELF, IMPLIED BY HIS SPATE OF RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS, WITH A FLAT "I KNOW WHEN TO STOP." HE REPEATED THIS TWO OR THREE TIMES. SIN THEN RELATED THAT "ELIZALDE" (WE ASSUME

ONE OF THE WEALTHY ELIZALDE FAMILY CLOSE TO MARCOS, EITHER J. FRED, THE BUSINESSMAN, OR ARMANDO, THE MINISTER FOR MINORITY AFFAIRS), CITING ACTIVITIES OF THE OPPOSITION ABROAD, HAD RECENTLY RAISED QUESTION WITH HIM OF CARDINAL'S POSSIBLE LEADERSHIP OF A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT. (COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST SUCH TALK OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE. AQUINO'S LETTER EXHORTING CARDINAL TO ASSUME MORAL LEADERSHIP OF NATION DID NOT CALL FOR HIS EXERCISE OF DIRECT POLITICAL POWER; MANILA 20544. IF THE ELIZALDE MISSION WAS DESIGNED BY MALACANANG, THIS WOULD BE INDICATION OF HOW NERVOUS SOME PEOPLE THERE HAVE BECOME IN RECENT WEEKS.) SIN SAID HE TOLD ELIZALDE "NO," THAT SUCH PARTICIPATION IS NOT THE PROPER ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND HE REPEATED IN A DETERMINED TONE THAT HE KNEW "WHEN TO STOP." AS IS HIS STYLE, THE CARDINAL THEN JOKED: "I TOLD THEM I COULD NOT BE A KHOMEINI BECAUSE I HAVE NO BEARD. REMEMBER THAT HAVING A BEARD (IN THE OLD TESTAMENT) SIGNIFIES POWER."

5. REACTION TO THE PASTORAL LETTER ON VIOLENCE HAS BEEN GOOD, CARDINAL ASSERTED, BUT HE DID NOT PROVIDE ANY SPECIFICS. (COMMENT: WE FOUND HIM UNCONVINCING ON THIS POINT. HE FAILED TO ANSWER DIRECT QUESTION ABOUT THE LETTER'S IMPACT ON THE PROGRESSIVE CLERGY.) SIN THEN LAUNCHED INTO DISCUSSION OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN VIOLENCE

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IS JUSTIFIED (JUST WARS, ETC.). THE CONCLUSION OF THE PASTORAL LETTER, SIN STATED, IS THAT THE SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES DOES NOT WARRANT RESORTING TO VIOLENCE -- "NOT YET." SIN OBSERVED THAT THE SITUATION COULD GET WORSE -- BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS THE POWER TO IMPROVE IT.

6. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONING, SIN GAVE EVERY INDICATION THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SPEAK OUT AS HE HAS IN PAST MONTHS. HE THEN REVIEWED BROAD OUTLINE OF HIS THINKING ON WHAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS: POLITICAL NORMALIZATION CULMINATING IN ELECTIONS. MARCOS SHOULD FORM A "CARETAKER" GOVERNMENT AND CALL ELECTIONS IN WHICH HE WILL NOT BE A CANDIDATE. IF HE DOES THAT, HE WILL BE A HERO AND ASSURE A GLORIOUS PLACE FOR HIMSELF IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY. THE IDEA OF LOCAL ELECTIONS WITHIN EIGHTEEN MONTHS IS FINE -- IF RPT IF MARCOS CAN BE BELIEVED. ALREADY HE HAS BEGUN TO SPEAK OF CONDITIONS (THE WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION, SITUATION IN SOUTH) WHICH MIGHT DELAY THESE ELECTIONS. LOCAL ELECTIONS FOLLOWED LATER BY ELECTIONS FOR A NEW BATASANG PAMBANSA IN 1984 (FOR WHICH, HE SAID, "THE PEOPLE CAN WAIT") WOULD BE

SATISFACTORY.

7. AGAIN WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAIL, THE CARDINAL
OBSERVED THAT THE MILITARY ABUSE SITUATION IN THE RURAL

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AREAS HAS IMPROVED FOLLOWING THE FORMATION OF THE BARBERO
COMMITTEE. SIN SAID HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY THE AUSTRALIAN
AMBASSADOR AFTER THE LATTER'S RECENT VISIT TO SAMAR, AND
WAS PLEASED TO HEAR HIS UPBEAT REPORT. SIN ALSO REMINDED
US THAT IN TRAVEL TO RURAL AREAS IT IS ALWAYS GOOD TO
CHECK WITH THE LOCAL BISHOP, WHO MONITORS LOCAL CONDITIONS
VERY CLOSELY.

8. THE MANILA SYNOD, THE MEETING OF CATHOLIC CLERGY AND
LAITY TO REVIEW A WIDE VARIETY OF CHURCH CONCERNS, COVERED
FAR MORE THAN JUST THE MARTIAL LAW QUESTION, WHICH
RECEIVED SUCH WIDE COVERAGE IN THE MEDIA (MANILA 20777).
THERE WERE ALMOST 200 RESOLUTIONS, OF WHICH THE MARTIAL
LAW RESOLUTION WAS ONLY ONE. THE CARDINAL MUST APPROVE
EACH ONE BEFORE THEY BECOME OFFICIAL AND THE PROCESS MAY
TAKE A WHILE. THE CARDINAL'S VIEW ON CRITICAL
COLLABORATION (COOPERATION WITH AND PRAISE FOR THE
GOVERNMENT WHEN WARRANTED/FREELY VOICED CRITICISM FOR THE
GOVERNMENT WHEN WARRANTED) IS UNCHANGED; THE SYNOD ADOPTED
IT UNANIMOUSLY, AS A RESOLUTION, TO GOVERN CHURCH-STATE
RELATIONS. THE TIMING OF THE SYNOD, THE FIRST IN OVER
HALF A CENTURY, WAS TO COINCIDE, THE CARDINAL SAID, WITH
THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MANILA DIOCESE. (COMMENT:
SYNOD ALSO SERVED AS AN EXCELLENT FOCUS FOR FURTHER
CRITICISM OF MARTIAL LAW AND WE SUSPECT ITS TIMING
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WAS AT LEAST PARTIALLY CHOSEN TO SERVE THIS PURPOSE.)

9. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, THE CARDINAL REITERATED HIS FAMILIAR POSITION ON MARTIAL LAW: IT WAS NEEDED AND JUSTIFIED IN 1972 AND THE EARLY YEARS BECAUSE OF THE PEACE AND ORDER SITUATION. BUT IT HAS GONE ON TOO LONG AND IS NO LONGER PRODUCTIVE. MARTIAL LAW HAS NOT SUCCEEDED IN REFORMING THE FILIPINO. CONDITIONS ARE WORSE TODAY. MARCOS IS USING IT JUST TO STAY IN POWER.

10. COMMENT: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CARDINAL'S FIRM AND REPEATED ASSERTION "I KNOW WHEN TO STOP" IS ITS INDICATION OF HIS CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE OVER- IDENTIFICATION WITH AQUINO (AN IDENTIFICATION SIN HIMSELF STIMULATED WITH HIS WEDDING ANNIVERSARY HOMILY LAST MONTH FOR THE AQUINOS AND AQUINO LATER NURTURED WITH HIS EMOTIONAL CALL FOR THE CARDINAL TO TAKE OVER OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP.) THIS SUGGESTS HE WANTS TO PULL HIMSELF AND THE CHURCH BACK FROM SUCH LINKAGE. WE WILL WATCH THE CARDINAL'S FUTURE STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS CAREFULLY TO SEE IF HE IS TRULY UNEASY ABOUT SUCH A RELATIONSHIP. MURPHY

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